



Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

Chapter I—At the suburban home of Charles Wainwright, "high financier," he and his broker, Scott Gibbs, hatch up a scheme to corner Borough Street railway stock. They rely upon the support of Dick Horrigan, boss of the neighboring city, who comes to discuss matters. Alderman Phelan, the thorn in Horrigan's side, whom Wainwright is anxious to conciliate, is also coming. Among the members of Wainwright's household are his niece and nephew, Dallas and Perry Wainwright, and his secretary, Thompson, a secretive young man in whom the financier has implicit confidence. Judge Newman, a neighbor of Wainwright, whose continuance in office depends upon Horrigan's favor, requests Wainwright's intervention with the boss. Another visitor to the Wainwrights is Alwyn Bennett, in love with Dallas, who is calling to ask her about her rumored engagement to Gibbs. Perry is in love with Cynthia Garrison, also a neighbor. II—Cynthia is the daughter of a bank president who nine years before the opening of the story was ruined by the dealings of an unnamed dishonest financier and shot himself. His son thereupon disappeared. Mrs. Bennett congratulates herself upon the immaculate record of her son's defeated father. Dallas refuses to marry Alwyn unless he does something worthy of his family and education. Phelan and Horrigan face each other. III—Phelan defies Horrigan. Judge Newman is turned down by the boss, but at Wainwright's request Horrigan becomes suspicious of Thompson, but Wainwright scoffs at the idea. Horrigan and Wainwright makes a corrupt deal whereby the former, for a big consideration, is to procure from the board of aldermen a perpetual franchise for the Borough street railway. The boss is worried by the reform movement threatening his power at the coming election and is casting about for a candidate for mayor with a clean record. He hits upon Bennett, who has had some slight political experience. The latter accepts, but warns Horrigan that, if elected, he will be absolutely honest and independent. IV—Bennett is elected and appoints Cynthia his private secretary. Phelan tells him that the financier who caused the ruin of the Garrisons was Wainwright, who is also the power behind the crooked Borough franchise bills, with Horrigan and Gibbs. Dallas and Mrs. Bennett visit the city hall. V—Gibbs tries to induce Bennett to sign the bill. The mayor's talk with Dallas is interrupted by Horrigan. VI—Bennett refuses to be bulldozed by Horrigan into signing the bill. The boss lacks one vote in the board of aldermen of the fourteen needed to pass the bill without the mayor's assent. Despite the fact that defeating the bill means impoverishing Dallas and Perry, whose fortune Wainwright has invested in Borough stock, Bennett vetoes the measure. VII—Bennett's plan to save Dallas and Perry is to have Perry sell Borough stock short. The mayor's opposition causes Horrigan and Wainwright to amend the bill, retaining however, some of the most objectionable features. VIII—Alwyn's love-making to Dallas at the Mayor's ball is interrupted by Horrigan. IX—Gibbs secretly plays false to Wainwright and Horrigan by buying Borough stock on his own account. Horrigan "fixes" Alderman Roberts, a wavering member of his "solid thirteen." X—Bennett warns Roberts against voting for the bill. In the presence of Cynthia, who is engaged to Perry, Phelan exposes Thompson as her brother, the long missing Harry Garrison, whereupon sister and brother embrace. Perry entering suddenly, is astonished at the sight. XI—Cynthia explains to Perry. Dallas is convinced by Wainwright that Bennett by vetoing the bill is trying to wreck her fortune. Thereupon Dallas promises to marry Gibbs. XII—Horrigan declares that if Bennett persists in his opposition to the bill he will publish indisputable proofs of granting by the mayor's father. Bennett's mother advises him to face the threatened disgrace and stick to his course.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE momentous Friday had arrived; the day whereon the famous—or infamous—Borough Street railway bill in its

amended form was to come up for the aldermen's consideration. Every paper in the city devoted columns to the situation. Everywhere it was known that the "boy mayor" was fighting with all his might the bill he had already vetoed. Equally well was it understood that Horrigan was making the battle of his whole career in behalf of the measure. If he could but induce his "solid thirteen" aldermen to stand firm and could maintain his hold on Roberts for the fourteenth, all would be plain sailing and the bill would pass by a two-thirds vote in spite of the mayor's veto. More than the mere bill and his price for it were included in Horrigan's reasons for his present activity. He recognized that his prestige as boss was at stake—that in case of failure his hold on the organization would be considerably weakened, perhaps almost so much shaken as to permit Phelan to fulfill his once absurd threat to tear him down from his eminence. For the whole organization was viewing with breathless interest the duel between Horrigan and the youthful mayor the boss had "made." In such circles a beaten man commands scant respect. The board of aldermen were in session in the city hall. Off the antechamber of the great room where they met was a small, snugly furnished apartment, first of a series of similar rooms that stretched away, with connecting doors, to the far end of the main corridor. This place, with the room adjoining, had once been the comptroller's office. Of late, however, that official had changed his quarters and the room nearest the antechamber had been appropriated by Horrigan himself as a sort of unofficial surgery, where he could sit at ease and transact business at close quarters whenever the organization's secret interests demanded his presence at the city hall. Here, his whereabouts known only to his intimate and personal lieutenants, the boss was wont to sit at ease, like some fat, rubicund spider in the center of a web of intrigue, and issue his orders or plans of campaign. Some of these were carried by word of mouth through the anteroom into the aldermanic chamber. Others he transmitted by means of a telephone that stood ready on the center table, before which his great easy chair was always placed. Around this table as the board of aldermen were about to convene on the fateful Friday of the Borough bill's final consideration sat three men—Wainwright, Gibbs and Horrigan. The former, in spite of his habitual steady coolness, was plainly uneasy. Gibbs made no effort to deny his anxiety. His eyes were bloodshot, his manner abstracted and his nerves evidently strung to breaking point. Horrigan alone of the trio had abated not one jot of the colossal calm and brutal power that were part and parcel of the man's mighty character. "When will our bill come up, do you suppose?" asked Gibbs, breaking a brief silence. "In half an hour or so probably," answered Horrigan, glancing at his watch. "I thought it was better for us to get here ahead of time." "Half an hour," fumed Gibbs, "and neither Ellis nor Roberts here yet! Suppose they don't get here on time?" "They will," granted Horrigan placidly. "Do you think it is possible either of them has come yet?" went on Gibbs, with a glance at the antechamber door. "No." "How do you know? Perhaps—" "Williams would have told me. He knows where I'm to be found." "You're sure Ellis and Roberts will show up?" "Yes." "How soon?" "In good time." "But suppose they don't?" Insisted Gibbs nervously. "What then?" "Why, if they don't, then they won't. What do you suppose?" snapped Horrigan. "What's the matter with you, anyhow? Are you looking for a museum job as the human question mark?" "Gibbs is naturally nervous," explained Wainwright. "He's not so old at this game as you and I, Horrigan, and we must make allowances." "Nervous?" grunted the boss. "I should say he is! Just look at that cigar I gave him. He's been chewing it as if it was a sausage. That's no way to treat a fifty cent cigar, man! Here, try another, and see if you can't smoke it instead of eating a free lunch off it. Nothing like a good smoke to steady your nerves. If—" The antechamber door opened, and Williams hurried in. "I got Ellis!" he reported. "He's here, and"—with significant emphasis—"he'll vote right!" "Good!" assented Horrigan. "I thought he'd come to time. Now, for Roberts and the thing's done." "The gallery in there is jammed," reported Wainwright, jerking his head toward the aldermanic chamber. "I never saw such a mob in the place before."

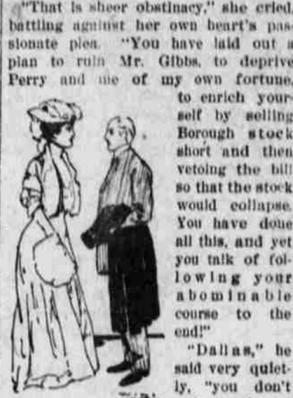
"That's what comes of all this newspaper publicity," growled Horrigan. "If it wasn't for the papers the people'd never make any trouble for us. But they read the news and then they get silly ideas about their 'rights,' and a lot of them come here to see they don't get swindled. Lord! If the papers would only suspend publication for one month, I'd guarantee to put the whole state in my vest pocket. They're always butting in to spoil the organization's honest profits. How are the crowd in the galleries behaving?" "They're quiet," answered Williams uneasily. "Too quiet. That's what bothers me. They seem to be waiting for the Borough bill to—" "If they raise any row, rush a motion through to clear the galleries," ordered Horrigan. "Nothing short of the police could clear away that big crowd." "Then we'll have the police in to help." "But," argued Williams, "that would mean a riot, and a lot of people would get hurt. All the newspapers tomorrow would—" "Never mind that. Go ahead and do as you're told. At the first sign of disapproval from the galleries have the motion passed and turn the police loose. Understand?" "All right," acquiesced Williams dubiously and withdrew. Wainwright opened his mouth to protest, but Horrigan was already busy at the telephone. "Hello" he called. "I want 900 F—900 F. Yes—yes. Is that the captain?" he went on a moment later. "Then send him to the phone. Tell him Mr. Horrigan—Hello, captain!" after another pause. "Yes, it's Horrigan. At city hall. In the aldermanic chamber there's a mob, and we're likely to need the police to quiet 'em. Yes. No, not 'dief' them, you fool! 'Quiet' them! Yes. Send us a squad at double quick, and let the sergeant report to Williams. Let the boys bring their night sticks, and tell 'em they're to take no back talk and not to be afraid to slug if it comes to that, and I guess it will. Pick out the right sort to send. Yes. Of course I'll back up anything they do. Sure. Rush 'em. Goodby." "But—" began Wainwright as Horrigan hung up the receiver. The boss cut him short. "I'll let that gallery crowd see it ain't safe to interfere with my work." "But," protested Wainwright, "surely it will not be necessary to—" "To break heads? It probably will. Why not?" "I'd rather use diplomatic tactics." "Diplomacy's a game I never took the trouble to learn." "But those people you're about to antagonize control votes?" "Yes. The people may control the votes, but we count them. See the difference?" "But doesn't the law permit the public to attend these meetings?" "Only so long as they behave themselves. If a few of 'em get clubbed they won't be so ready next time to butt in where they aren't wanted. They—" The tinkle of the telephone bell cut short the boss' public spirited remarks. Horrigan unslung the receiver. "Hello!" he hailed. "Who's—Oh, Roberts, eh?" "Is it Roberts?" cried Gibbs excitedly. "No," snarled Horrigan in ponderous sarcasm. "It's the czar of Russia telephoning to borrow a nickel. I called him 'Roberts' just to flatter him. Go on, Roberts! What's that? Yes, this is Mr. Horrigan. Want to see me, do you? What for? No, there isn't." He went on angrily after a moment's listening. "You and I settled all that. Come and do your share of the—Yes, I tell you it's up to you to make good." Another pause, during which Gibbs and Wainwright glanced at each other in suspense. Then the boss continued, in a louder voice, over the wire: "Well, come to my room in the city hall, then, if you've got to see me. But there's no need for it. It's all settled, and there's nothing more to be said. I'll be here. Don't keep me waiting. I—What's that? No! I won't come to you! You'll come to me, and you'll come on the double quick! Jump now! If you don't—No, that's all. Hurry up!" "Wouldn't it be wiser," suggested Gibbs, "to humor the man by going to him, as he suggests? Then—" "No, it wouldn't!" retorted Horrigan as he kept the telephone. "If I'd gone on the principle of 'humor' folks, I'd still be working at eight cents per selling ferry tickets. Take my tip, friend! Never go to a man. Make him come to you. That's business. And it given you a 90 per cent better chance with him. Now, then," pulling a paper from his pocket. "I told you about the report I had from Morris & Cherrington dig out showing up Bennett's old man. Here it is. Like to look it over while we're waiting?" "Little enough good it seems to have done!" returned Wainwright as the three heads bent over the document. "He's still fighting us, tooth and nail."

"Yes," agreed Horrigan grimly. "but it's a satisfaction to know it isn't only us he's fighting. He's cutting his own throat too."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE first committee room that lay to the right of Horrigan's office—in the same relation to it as the antechamber to the left—was usually given over to dry official business, and its musty walls must almost have experienced a distinct shock about this time as Dallas Wainwright entered from the corridor behind. She was accompanied by Perry and by Phelan, who, passing through the corridor toward the aldermanic chamber, had collided with the brother and sister at the committee room door. "Here's a good sight for sore eyes, Miss Wainwright," the alderman was saying with his best air. "But is it fair to ask what brings such a bunch of sunshine into an old pit'ral shell like this? I'd as soon think of seeing Horrigan at mass as to find you here." "I want to attend the aldermen's meeting," exclaimed Dallas. "I have a special reason. So I made Perry bring me. But at the door they told us the gallery was so crowded that we couldn't—" "Never you mind the gallery, miss," interrupted Phelan. "It isn't meant for the likes of you anyway. You just sit here a few minutes, and I'll catch an attendant somewhere and make him hustle up a couple of good chairs for you on the main floor, where you can pipe everything just like you were in your own op'ra box coppin' off a swad of high C's." "Thank you so much, alderman," replied Dallas. "I hope we're not putting you to too much trouble." "No trouble at all. An' even if it was I'd come a-runnin' to meet it. I'm the original trouble eater. Besides, the best in the house is none too good for the lady who was so interested in my outtings. So long! I'll be right back." "What a queer chap he is!" mused Perry, as Phelan hastened away on his mission. "If I could take a six weeks' course in slang and hot air from that man I'd be able to sew buttons on the whole English language." "I don't think you need very much tuition," observed Dallas. "But it was kind of Mr. Phelan to look after us. I like him be—" "Because he's standing by Bennett so pluckily in this fight?" "Mr. Bennett is nothing to me." "No?" asked Perry in innocent amazement. "Then I wasted a lot of good cigarette money cabling to you about his campaign when you were across the big wash last summer. For a man who was 'nothing' to you you sure took large swads of intelligent interest. Look here, little girl," he went on, less flippantly, "what's the matter? Has anything?" "No!" she broke in, with a miserable effort at courage. "Nothing's the matter. I'm perfectly happy. Why shouldn't I be? An engaged girl is always—" "An engaged girl!" he shouted in high glee. "You don't mean to say you and Alwyn?" "Of course not. I am engaged to Mr. Gibbs." "Good Lord!" gasped the lad in honest dismay. "If that's meant for a joke, it's the punkest ever! Did?" "It isn't a joke, Perry, and it's very rude of you to talk so. I am engaged to Mr. Gibbs, and—" "But—how—when did the atrocity come off, and?" "I became engaged to him the night of the administration ball. I didn't want to tell you yet, because I knew you don't like him. I'm—I'm—" "You're happy?" "Certainly I am!" she retorted defiantly. "So happy that I—" "That you are having a fight to keep from crying this blessed minute!" he finished. "Say, Dallas, it breaks me all up to have you so miserable. I think a whole lot of you. More'n of any one else but Cynthia. And I want to help you out of this measly mixup. Won't you?" "There is nothing any one can do," she murmured sadly. "I have chosen my course and I—" "Cheese it!" whispered Perry in hurried admonition. "Here comes Bennett, and Phelan's with him." The young mayor came in, talking to the alderman as he came. "This room's disengaged," he was saying. "I'll write it here and give it to—oh, I beg your pardon," he broke off, recognizing Dallas and Perry. "I didn't know—" "I've got two good seats for you," announced Phelan. "Right where you can see 'n' hear the whole shootin' match. An' I guess before the meetin' over it's liable to get as interestin' as a double 'Uncle Tom' show in a tent. I'll show you the way as soon as you're ready. There's no rush. Things ain't begun to sizzle up yet." Bennett had crossed to where Dallas stood irresolute and, under cover of Phelan's talk with Perry, said to her, with a certain unconscious stiffness: "I fear I was too taken back by your announcement the other evening to remember to congratulate you, but please believe me when I say I wish you every happiness in the new life you have chosen." "Thank you very much," faltered Dallas. There was an awkward pause; then she said: "You came in—here to write something. I'm afraid we are detaining you. You must be busy with your fight against the Borough bill. You are quite determined to continue it to the end?" "To the bitter end!" he answered miserably. "Even though that end can hold nothing but bitterness for me."

The set anguish in his face moved Dallas more than she dared confess even to herself. "I am sorry," she said softly. "It is the course I have chosen," he answered, with a shrug, "and if it leads to eternal darkness instead of the sunlight I expected I must follow it none the less."



"Dallas," he said very quietly, "you don't understand."

"That is sheer obstinacy," she cried, battling against her own heart's passionate plea. "You have laid out a plan to ruin Mr. Gibbs, to deprive Perry and me of my own fortune, to enrich yourself by selling Borough stock short and then vetoing the bill, so that the stock would collapse. You have done all this, and yet you talk of following your abominable course to the end!" "Dallas," he said very quietly, "you don't understand, and you refused to trust me to explain, so I can say no more. But one day you may learn the cruel mistake you are making." "Mistake?" "I don't mean that you are mistaken in choosing Gibbs instead of me, but that you are wrong in your judgment of what I am doing. I hope you will understand some day. It will be too late to change anything then, but at least I shall be set right in your eyes. And that means more to me than you can ever know. Goodby." He left the room abruptly, and Dallas stared after him, her brain a whirl with conflicting thoughts. "There's a man in ten million, miss," volunteered Phelan, breaking in on her reverie, "an' from the looks of that bran' new dinky, three-k spark on your finger I guess you're wise to the fact." "I am engaged to Mr. Gibbs," replied Dallas coldly. "What the—" gasped Phelan, checking himself just in time. "I'm sure sorry for you, miss," he went on, with a sincerity that precluded any offense. "for frien' Gibbs is going to have something so heavy fall on his bank roll by the time we're through with this Borough bill that he'll be able to use his wad for a book mark without erkin' any of the leaves. Why, he'll—" "Come, Perry," interrupted Dallas. "Shall we go to the meeting now?" Confused, she turned to the door leading into Horrigan's room instead of that opening on the corridor and found herself face to face with her uncle, the boss and Gibbs. "I beg your pardon," she began, surprised. "I didn't know—" "Dallas!" exclaimed Gibbs and Wainwright in the same breath. Horrigan scowled at the interruption as all three men rose to their feet. "What brings you to a place like this?" asked Wainwright in displeasure. "Perry and I," indicating her brother, who had followed her into the room, "are going to attend the meeting of the board of aldermen." "But," protested her uncle disapprovingly, "it is hardly the sort of—" "My fortune and Perry's and that of the man I am to marry are all bound up in the Borough bill," she answered fearlessly. "I have a right to be present when that bill's fate is decided." "Good nerve!" applauded Horrigan. "You're a thoroughbred. If there were more women like you—" "Mr. Horrigan," reported Williams, hurrying in from an antechamber, "the police have come, and—" "All right," answered the boss. "Give the sergeant his orders." "I—I hardly like the responsibility," muttered Williams, "and—" "But you'll take it. I'm backing you. By the way, get seats for Miss Wainwright and her brother. Get them close to the anteroom door, so if there's a row she can come back here. If there are no vacant seats there, clear a couple of people out and make place for—" "But we have seats," protested Dallas as Williams sped on his errand. "Alderman Phelan—" "Alderman Phelan will have trouble finding a seat in this city when I'm done with him," snarled Horrigan. "Better take the seats I offer, Miss Wainwright. They're safer." "But," protested Wainwright, "if there's to be any danger she mustn't be there. I can't have—" "I will be on hand to help her if there is," Gibbs answered him. "H'm!" grunted Horrigan in somewhat uncomplimentary doubt. "I will, too!" spoke up Perry. Horrigan nodded approval. "You'll be all right then," said he. "And now—" "You spoke of the police being in the aldermanic chamber," said Dallas. "What for?" "To check any trouble the gallery may make," answered Horrigan. "This man Bennett's stirred the people up with a lot of his anarchistic reform ideas till they're crazy. Some one's liable to get a broken skull, and then Bennett will have himself to thank. Maybe when the police have hammered a little sense into folks' heads with their nightsticks, the victims will begin to understand just what sort of a man Alwyn Bennett is. Remember now, Gibbs, and you, too, young Wainwright, if there's any sign of a row

bring Miss Wainwright back here at once." "All right," agreed Perry, a little rueful at the prospect of missing a free fight. "Let's go in there now. I've never been to an aldermen's meeting before, but I ran up against a car strike riot once, so I guess I'm on to most of the subtle rules of elegance that govern such shows. Come on, people, if you're coming." "Your niece is a thoroughbred," repeated Horrigan, with rare approbation, as the anteroom door closed behind Dallas and her two escorts. "So she's to marry Gibbs, is she? I'm sorry for them both." "Why?" asked Wainwright sharply. "Because it won't take her a year to find out that he's a yellow cur. And when she does she'll either kick him out or lead him around on a chain. Now, the fellow a girl of that sort ought to have married is Bennett. He's an obstinate fool, but he's a man. I thought you said once he was stuck on her." "He was. He still is." "And she took Gibbs instead?" cried Horrigan, a world of incredulity in his rough voice. "Women are a queer lot! Why'd she shake Bennett, if it is a fair question?" "I let her see Gibbs was a heroic martyr," said Wainwright, with quiet significance, "and that Bennett was—" "Oh, I see!" chuckled Horrigan. "Still, there might be something made out of Bennett's love for her even yet." "What do you mean?" "I'm not quite sure. I'll have to think it over." "Roberts has come!" exclaimed Williams, entering from the corridor. "He's asking for you. Shall I bring him in here?" "Yes," replied Horrigan. "By the way," he added to Wainwright as Williams departed, "I'll have to ask you to clear out for a few minutes. I've got to see Roberts alone. Now for the tussle that'll decide the whole fight!"

(To be continued).

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